

JCR Open Meeting Minutes

Meeting on 27.11.2023 at 19:00 UK time

List of Committee Members

Names, initials, pronouns and * to mark non-attendance	Role
Jacob Hougie, JH , He/him	President
Daisy O'Connor, DOC , she/her	Vice President
Oliver Law, OL , he/him	Treasurer
Luka Murphy, LM , he/him	Secretary
Salma Salifu, SS , she/her	Welfare
Julia Sinkinson, JS , she/her	Welfare
Luke Tyler, LT , he/him	Welfare
Jess Morrissey, JM , She/her	Academic and Access
Ryan Simpson, RS , they/them	Green
Ruth Chapman, RC , she/her	Catering, Accommodation and Facilities
Amit Ramakrishna Prasad, ARP , he/him	Sports and Societies
Neela Nee, NN , she/her	Ents
Saira Ahmed, SA , she/her	Ethnic Minorities
Cosma Rubben, CR , she/her	International Students
Harley Chidley, HC , they/them	LGBTQ+
Maisie Johnson, MJ , she/her	Gender Equalities
Malachi Gee, MG , he/him	Disabled Students
Eleanor Lewis, EL , she/her	Class Act
Lucy Robertson, LR , she/her	Computing (non-voting)

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Summary of Key Points

The JCR decided to interact, cautiously, with college about the newly proposed Pelican Officer, aiming to prioritise crafting a role description that emphasises liaising with college.

The JCR was broadly unhappy with college's proposal to introduce a debit system on UPay, and aims to work with college to pursue other mechanisms to relieve the financial burden on students.

The Kettle-ban has been introduced. The JCR takes a broadly oppositional stance.

One-Off Purchases were summed-up. The JCR has an apparent surplus as regards this fund.

The JCR was broadly supportive of women only hours in the gym, especially on a model of a moveable set of hours, a few times a week.

Action Points

The JCR should prepare to liaise as a body with college to ensure a favourable role description for the new Pelican officer.

The JCR should prepare to express their reservation with the UPay debit system at future meetings with college.

JCR Committee members should vote on approving the One-Off Purchases

JCR Committee members to coordinate with the MCR on proposing Women/NB hours at the Gym

JCR to investigate encouraging college to buy 15kg dumbbells for the gym

JCR to feedback about SALTO locks running out of charge

0. Administrative Matters

JH begins the meeting by greeting the assembled students, by announcing the final Open Meeting. He begins with action points from previous meetings. He asks **OL** about the football team, he replies that it is currently a work in progress.

Meeting begins at 19:11

1. Congratulations to the new committee

JH next extends his thanks to the former and congratulations future committee.¹

¹ To the current committee, he especially extends his thanks to those who have been dedicated enough to turn up to this meeting

2. Comments on College's Proposed 'Pelican Project'.

JH outlines a proposal from college. The university has opened bids for colleges to compete for money from a central fund. The university consulted with the JCR at Welfare and EDI meetings. The colleges has worked up a proposal through its internal structure. This has resulted in a Pelican Officer – formally the 'Wellbeing, Belonging and Inclusion Coordinator'. They will organise events for is designed to solve the rampant loneliness and anxiety among undergraduates.

JH notes that this has not been the JCR's preferred use of the funds. At the meetings there was a broad neutrality to this proposal, as these events would likely only be attended by individuals with a prior interest. It might even have the potential for further exclusion. **JH** asks the assembled undergraduates for their opinions on the proposed role.

Ayesha Miah asks who this officer would be. **JH** states that it was likely to be a recent graduate, preferably one who'd experience Oxbridge.

Ayesha Miah then asks how this programme will work considering their role seems to overlap with some of the JCR officers. **JH** agrees, but states that from college's perspective this will be a more permanent role, with the advantages of institutional knowledge and more time to dedicate.

Jacob Simmonds asks how college responded to the JCR's complaints. **JH** replies that the JCR proposed utilising common spaces, extending freshers, improving the gym etc. College argued that the officer will run physical health exercises such as Pilates, and also promised to improve the use of facilities.

DOC elucidates that she believes college believes this is a facility issue and therefore the university will not give the JCR funding. **Reuben Bolton** jumps in asking, how the critiques of the JCRs proposals can't be applied to their own scheme.

JH responds that this fund is for 'risky bets' and therefore not for day-to-day college work. This is more likely to receive the funding because it might solve the problem of loneliness in college. **JH** expresses the idea that perhaps schemes with a higher success chance should be pursued.

DOC elaborates, pointing out that the fund is for very high risk ideas, and aiming to develop them into long-term programmes. She suggests that the Pelican Officer is not likely to be the best solution for current students' problems.

Anna Harper suggests that this is much like having a SU sabbatical officer inside college. Hosting events will not necessarily help with loneliness as many people tend to self-exclude. It was noted that between the JCR, College and University societies and everything else in Cambridge, there is no shortage of events.

Reuben Bolton asks if the officer would be a college shoe-in. **JH** replies that it could be a fellow or a recently-graduated student. **Reuben Bolton** replies that many welfare issues require strong cooperation with college, and therefore that role might be fulfilled by this officer. **JH** replies that this is usually the role for the Senior Tutor, who is doing an excellent job, thought notes that if the 'Pelican Officer' to share office space with fellows, they may be a useful additional liaison.

Anna Harper asks whether the college gym is equipped for calisthenics. **Heather Taylor** replies that it is not likely to be the case, considering the

position of the equipment. **JH** reveals that college are considering bringing an electric heater into the gym over winter.

JH asks if there are any more substantial comments. **Ollie Donaldson** and **Reuben Bolton** inquire how the proposal will work, and note that free money is good money. **JH** explains that there are 2 rounds and that therefore college could technically apply for the 2nd round of funding. **JH** states that this proposal will be going to GB and therefore it is likely to be pushed through as college is aiming for the early deadline for the first round of funding.

DOC states that in the proposal, if the officer is established, the JCR and MCR would be asked to help provide a role description for the officer. Registering our disagreement at this stage might give us more space for negotiation in the future.

JM argues that the role might be able to advocate for students with more senior members of college. **DOC** agrees, and states that perhaps the officer could be made more of a liaison.

JH says that going forward, while reservations will be expressed to GB, the JCR is willing to cooperate and try to further improve the proposal. He asks if this the general feeling.

Many heads nod.

3. Pre-payment system on UPay

JH explains that College has proposed switching UPay from a credit system to a debit system. The JCR has raised several concerns.

Separately, he notes that there have been broader technical issues with UPay, for instance its propensity to double-charge and the lack of price displays. **RC** adds that you can challenge charges simply by emailing college.

Kitty Joyce states that the till machine has been broken for months, and that there might be legal issues with not providing a price. **Reuben Bolton**, the resident lawyer, concurs.

JH notes these concerns and explains that staff have been told to tell students the price before they pay, but this rarely happens.² He suggests that if people don't feel rude doing so, they may wish to ask for the price before tapping.

RC points out that the price is displayed immediately on UPay. **DOC** states that this has been raised multiple times with college, but the technical issues remain

DOC and **RC** state that college has also been working towards making the bar display visible, as it currently faces a wall.

RC asks **OL** to repeat his point. He wants the pricing menu to be made larger and clearer.

JH brings the committee back round to focusing on the credit issue. He suggests that it might put people off going into hall or prevent people from loading enough money onto their card in the first place. College argues that it might help people with budgeting. **JH** states he knows one person who informed him that it might help them budget.

² Notes of surprise are heard

Ayesha Miah states that she had a similar system at school, which was discouraging to students at the time. The timing with student loans might also prevent people from topping up their cards.

Reuben Bolton eulogises on the great hall culture at Corpus, where going to hall is the default, a tradition he fears might be lost.

Jacob Simmonds points out that a potential issue is that balances might not carry over between terms. **JH** states that cash on the card would be taken off college bills at the end of term. He also reassures the undergraduates that college will not be implementing the scheme immediately.

Ayesha Miah argues that this will not aid budgeting because the food prices are variable, and not having enough cash on hand might cause embarrassment at the till.

JM adds that not paying for food is not a problem with budgeting, but rather with not having enough cash.

JH states that college insist that there will be an overdraft function, which will put one in debt to UPay, but prevent issues where you have got food but can't pay because you've not topped up yet.

MG points out that there are many exterior circumstances, beyond one's control that might affect payment during term. Paying the whole bill at a later date helps one understand the cost and bring finances together. Much of the funding assistance also comes after or between terms.

DOC states that college have always said that if one cannot afford food, they should purchase in hall and later have a discussion. But with this

system, having an overdraft, with no timeframe, presents a new psychological issue.

Kitty Joyce states that college should make this policy clearer. **DOC** says that going to one's tutor is the norm. In terms of budgeting, college could do more currently. For instance, having a more regular timing for bills, and being more transparent about price changes. College insists that other colleges have this debit system, but this doesn't seem at all clear in conversations with other JCRs, and in any case many other colleges have much better cooking facilities.

Anna Harper states that, as a self-caterer, she doesn't know how many times she will go to hall in a term. Hall is a random variable that can't be accounted for. She asks if more money could be added on during term.

JH confirms that that will be the case and acknowledges that this might cause increased bureaucracy for students.

Jacob Simmonds asks why this scheme was suggested beyond budgeting. He suggests it might form part of a money-making scheme.

JH says that they haven't, but they have hinted that it might reduce the use of the hardship fund and it would put less pressure on the finance office. **JH** personally considers this to be somewhat of a façade.³

DOC states that price increases might be a bigger hurdle to finances than budgeting. **RC** states that the increase in price was not that much, about 10%.

³ This may have been expressed in slightly different language

DOC points out that if so many people are maxing out UPay at the beginning of term, there must be a more systemic issue.

RC checks her notes, and reveals that cafeteria prices have increased by 10%, in comparison to a 17% increase in the price of meat, for instance.

JH asks for more comments on the issue, or hall more generally.

There are none forthcoming.

4. Kettles Update

JH introduces this agenda item by revealing that he is the bearer of bad news. He had asked college for statistics on the state of the college's electrics. They have not been able to provide him with any, apart from the fact that his room is a great threat to stability of the college's wiring. He notes that without evidence of the supposed threat it is hard to go further in encouraging members to follow this new rule.

Anna Harper states that during fire training the external coordinator stated that a kettle in a room is a fire risk. He was from the fire compliance company.

JH points out that college have explicitly stated that kettles are not a fire risk. **DOC** states that at Newnham there was a fire alarm at 9, apparently due to a kettle. **MG** states that the fire alarms are old and therefore depend on particulate-detection which might cause them to be faulty.

Anna Harper points out that some of the alarms are optical, and therefore could be set off by a water leak.

JH suggests that members need not worry about informing others of the ban but to remain conscious that there is formally now a prohibition on the exercise of their basic liberties. **Reuben Bolton** asks if we can use our kettles in honour of John Taylor. **JH** points out that his invention makes the kettles electrical safe, but not fire safe.

Kitty Joyce asks if we can turn all our kettles on at once to test the electrics. **JH** states that kettles have not as yet caused problems.

General conversation erupts concerned with boilers, kettles, and wiring, among other topics.

5. One-Off Purchases Delays

OL introduces this item by asking the committee to list One-Off Purchase Delays that are outstanding. **JH** replies that there are 822 pounds in dressing gowns outstanding, however that money will be reimbursed to the JCR by finance. **OL** announces that the fund has a surplus of 465.75 pounds.

Jacob Simmonds asks if the fund includes welfare. **OL** states that this only deals with the one-off purchase fund. If every fund is to be considered, we will have a surplus.

JH states that all of the money has been spent. **JH** asks for a poll to be put on the committee WhatsApp to approve the purchases as there is no committee quorum present.

6. Times for Women/NB Only Hours at the Gym

JH introduces this item by stating that it has been proposed for a long time. Women and non-binary members could attend the gym at specific times solely for them. It would be an informal system, perhaps with a poster on the door. The JCR and MCR have been asked for feedback. Note that fellows and staff also use the gyms.

Anna Harper asks that the times be moved to different times every day.

Ollie Donaldson points out that the mornings are currently busy. He asks how long the time periods will be. **JH** states that each will be 1-2 hours. **RC** quips that perhaps the hours could be on days that Ollie is not in.

JM states that perhaps the time could be in the evening to ensure that staff could exercise after work. **RC** states that this might prevent male members of staff using the gym. **JH** states that this programme would probably not run every day, and only after a trial time.

JH asks the college for further comments, including on how horrible the gym is. **Ollie Donaldson** asks for 15 kg dumbbells as they appear to have been stolen, producing a discrepancy in weight.

Reuben Bolton points out that the lie down rack is in an odd position, preventing him from using it. **Ollie Donaldson** states that you are now able to, you just have to jig it around. **Reuben Bolton** asks if the JCR might be able to purchase one. **JH** replies this would have to be funded by college. He also states that the Bursar is eager to cut down

expenditure among the committees at college. **LM** states that perhaps the wine committee might have to scale back.

Ollie Donaldson states that the gym is pretty underused as is, and so this scheme might not be useful. **JH** states that the college hopes that this proposal might bring more people to the gym. **OL** suggests that the gym might be moved to Old House.

7. Any Other Business

DOC asks for freshers to fill out the freshers' week feedback form, especially on extending freshers' week to ensure that college are pressured for next year.

Jacob Simmonds asks for college not to install new electronic locks, because his ran out of battery. The porters had to take the handle off to change the batteries.

JH thanks him for the feedback. He asks if his posterboard is nice and big.

OL states that he was meant to get his bursary money in week 4 and was wondering who he should ask. **MG** replies that he should contact Tess.

Anna Harper asks how one can book part of the bar. **JH** replies that it is through the events booking system.

Ollie Donaldson asks when Bene't will be back. **JH** replies that it will occur when 'the rugby lads re-stuff him'. **Reuben Bolton** asks if he should in fact come back. Conversation descends into complimenting Bene't's numerous virtues.

OL states that **James O'Garro** spent a significant amount of money, 700 pounds, on club tickets at Oxford as part of the Corpus Challenge. He wonders whether college will reimburse the JCR. **JH** promises this will be discussed with college.

Meeting ends at 20:00